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DE RUEHKO #6492/01 3170742
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 130742Z NOV 06
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8237
INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/THE WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/USDOJ WASHDC PRIORITY
RULSDMK/USDOT WASHDC PRIORITY
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2480

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 09 TOKYO 006492

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FAS/ITP FOR SCHROETER; PACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR;
CINCPAC FLT/PA/ COMNAVFORJAPAN/PA.

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [ECON](#) [ELAB](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 11/13/06-2

INDEX:

- (17) Schieffer: (Rumsfeld's departure) will not affect US force realignment
- (18) Japan-US relations: US will lose interest in Asia policy due to Democratic victory in midterm elections
- (19) Framework for Asian partnership: APEC to take up FTA proposed by US; Washington aims to block Japan
- (20) US military aircraft's touch-and-go training to be relocated to site outside 180 kilometers of Iwakuni; Gov't rejects US request
- (21) Minshuto to partially embrace right to collective defense
- (22) Editorial: Deliberations on raising JDA to ministry status - National defense must take priority over party interests
- (23) Questions for town meetings on educational reform found to have been "prearranged"; Another trick behind "Koizumi theater"

ARTICLES:

- (17) Schieffer: (Rumsfeld's departure) will not affect US force realignment

US Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer gave an interview to an Asahi Shimbun reporter at his official residence on Nov. 9. Regarding former CIA chief Robert Gates, nominated by President George W. Bush to replace Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Schieffer said: "He understands the importance of Japan in US diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region, and he will contribute to US-Japan relations." The exit of Rumsfeld will also not change the planned realignment of US forces in Japan or the ongoing deployment of the Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) ground-to-air missile defense system in Okinawa and mainland Japan against North Korean ballistic missiles, the ambassador said.

Schieffer explained Tuesday's US midterm elections, in which the Democrats gained control of Congress: "In the United States, it has been rare for the same party to control the administration and Congress at the same time. If the Democrats and Republicans have to reach out to each other, that's not necessarily a bad thing."

The ambassador also expressed hope for the new defense secretary to come up with a new approach to Iraq policy, the major issue in the campaign. He indicated that the election results would not lead to an immediate withdrawal from Iraq, saying, "I don't think either the Democrats or the Republicans want to leave Iraq in a mess."

Concerning North Korea, Schieffer indicated that calls in Congress for a direct dialogue with North Korea have dwindled with Pyongyang's announcement that it would return to the six-party talks. He also said, "I don't think the election results will bring about any change," adding, "North Korea will not be allowed to drive a wedge between the United States and its allies." The ambassador also indicated that the governments of the United States and Japan would continue working closely in the field of missile defense, stating: "The great majority of the Japanese people are hoping to

TOKYO 00006492 002 OF 009

see PAC-3 missiles deployed not only in Okinawa but also mainland Japan, as well. They will bring greater security to Japan."

Touching on the nuclear debate in Japan, the ambassador said: "The answer to this question is not whether Japan needs to go nuclear but how to strengthen the US-Japan alliance." He thus stressed that the bilateral security treaty obliges the United States to defend Japan under its nuclear umbrella.

(18) Japan-US relations: US will lose interest in Asia policy due to Democratic victory in midterm elections

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Full)
November 10, 2006

US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was dismissed. A huge aftershock of the US midterm congressional elections, in which the Democratic Party scored big gains, has already come to the relationship between Japan and the United States.

In response to the will of voters, the Bush administration has finally taken action to revise its Iraq policy led by Rumsfeld. President Bush's seeming admission of a failure in his Iraq policy will give a major blow to the Japanese government, which has completely supported the US Iraq policy by dispatching Self-Defense Forces troops to Iraq.

Moreover, the resignation of Rumsfeld, who led bilateral negotiations on the realignment of US forces in Japan, will give great concern to the Japanese government. Especially the costs for the realignment plan, regarding which Japan reportedly will bear 26 billion dollars, "There is a possibility that the US Congress, in which the Democratic Party has power, will demand that Japan incur more costs," said James Schoff, associate director of the Asia-Pacific Studies of the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis (IFPA), a US think-tank.

The rising power of the Democratic Party in the United States will gradually come down hard on the Bush administration regarding its North Korea policy. During the midterm election campaign, the Democratic Party criticized the administration, saying that North

Korea conducted a nuclear test because the US had refused to hold a direct dialogue with it. The Democrats urged a policy shift. If the Bush administration assumes a flexible policy stance, the Japanese government will lose its strong backer.

The rumor has been floated in the US that Ambassador to the United Nations Bolton, who supported Japan's bid to impose sanctions on North Korea, may be replaced.

There is also growing concern that if the Bush administration begins a review of its Iraq policy, it will have little energy to spend for security in Northeast Asia. A source familiar with the Japanese government asserted, "There will be no big change in the US Asia policy as long as the Bush administration continues." But for Japan it is a serious issue if the United States loses interest in North Korea.

A ranking Japanese official grumbled: "We will have a difficult time in dealing with various matters because we have negotiated only with the Bush administration for a long time."

The question is how the Japanese government, which has tilted toward

TOKYO 00006492 003 OF 009

the Bush administration and the Republican Party, will be able to cooperate with the US in which the Democratic Party has power. The ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) is unfamiliar with the US Democratic Party, which is more sensitive about the issue of visiting Yasukuni Shrine than the Republican Party.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will hold his first meeting with President Bush in Hanoi next weekend. Abe hopes to discuss North Korea policy and USFJ realignment with Bush. However, it will be difficult for the two leaders to reach a consensus, since there appear to be gaps between them.

(19) Framework for Asian partnership: APEC to take up FTA proposed by US; Washington aims to block Japan

MAINICHI (Page 9) (Full)
November 13, 2006

Prospects have now become stronger that the feasibility of a free trade agreement (FTA) involving the entire Asia-Pacific region consisting of 21 countries and territories will be discussed for the first time at ministerial and summit meetings at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference (APEC) forum. The US is strongly calling for such a debate. The realization of the US proposal would mean the formation of a huge economic bloc that would account for approximately 60% of the world's gross domestic product (GDP). However, there is little chance of such a framework materializing anytime soon. The proposal was made in large part to block the East Asia Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) proposed by Japan. A struggle for leadership of the fast-growing East Asian region is about to start.

According to an informed source, the US has used such occasions as the preparatory APEC meeting in September to propose looking into the feasibility of an Asia-Pacific FTA. Following the US proposal, participating countries are now undertaking final coordination of views with the possibility of mentioning in a summit declaration and a ministerial statement that consideration will be given to the US proposal.

However, the feasibility of the US proposal is doubtful. APEC is characterized as having diversity with its membership including industrialized and developing countries. The sizes of the economies of member nations and the degree of their development differ. Under the Bogor Declaration, the deadline set for industrialized countries to achieve the target of liberalizing trade and investment is 2010 and that for developing countries is 2020. The initiative proposed by the US, which targets economic liberalization in a wider region, is taken as an issue to be tackled in the distant future, as a senior official of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry put it.

Nevertheless, the US has proposed this initiative out of wariness about economic bloc initiatives involving East Asia proposed by Japan and China. China has proposed an economic bloc under the framework of ASEAN+3. In rivalry with China, Japan has come up with an East Asia EPA involving 16 countries - ASEAN+3 plus India, Australia, and New Zealand. The plan is to launch concrete studies on its feasibility with concerned countries starting next year.

With trade liberalization talks under the World Trade Organization (WTO) stalemated, strengthening relations with East Asian countries, which are achieving high growth, has become a major goal for leading

TOKYO 00006492 004 OF 009

countries. The US has expressed strong dissatisfaction with those two plans that do not involve US participation, saying that they would draw a demarcation line between East and West right in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. It is now trying to drive a wedge between Japan and other countries by revealing at APEC, its only stepping stone into East Asia, its own economic bloc initiative that includes Washington. Economy, Trade, and Industry Minister Akira Amari hopes to dodge the US move, noting, "I support the US plan as one direction, but the East Asia EPA consisting of 16 countries is necessary as a base for such an initiative."

However, since the US proposal as a major power carries weight, it will be taken up at APEC as a future agenda item.

(20) US military aircraft's touch-and-go training to be relocated to site outside 180 kilometers of Iwakuni; Gov't rejects US request

YOMIURI (Top play) (Abridged)
November 12, 2006

Japan and the United States have agreed to redeploy carrier-borne fighter jets from the US Navy's Atsugi Air Facility in Kanagawa Prefecture to the US Marine Corps' Iwakuni Air Station in Yamaguchi Prefecture in line with the realignment of US forces in Japan. On this issue, the government decided yesterday to select a permanent site over 180 kilometers of the Iwakuni base for their night landing practice (NLP). The government has concluded that there is no suitable place in the Inland Sea or in the northeastern part of Kyushu. The government will present its new plan to the United States soon and will come up with several candidate sites over a wide area, including the southern part of Kyushu, by the end of March next year.

Atsugi-based US carrier-borne fighter jets are currently conducting NLP and other drills on Iwo Jima. However, Iwo Jima is far from the Atsugi base. Moreover, there is no place for US fighter jets to make emergency landings on their way to that island if and when there is something wrong with them. The US government has therefore asked Japan to set up a permanent training site.

In May, Tokyo and Washington finalized a report on US force realignment, specifying their agreement to redeploy the Atsugi-based wing of carrier-borne fighter jets by 2014. Meanwhile, the two governments have gone no further than to say they will select a training facility by July 2009 or at the earliest possible date thereafter.

The United States, before releasing the final report, proposed conducting NLP at the Iwakuni base. However, Japan rejected the proposal due in part to local opposition. The United States has therefore asked to pick a site within about 100 nautical miles-or 180 kilometers-of the Iwakuni base.

Normally, in case a carrier-borne jet refueled enough to fly for about an hour and 30 minutes takes off from a base, it can return to that base after carrying out touch-and-go-training more than 10 times at a training site located within about 180 kilometers. As it stands, an area of up to about 180 kilometers is an efficient distance for training, according to a staff officer of the Self-Defense Forces.

The government has so far looked into the feasibility of some candidate sites situated within 180 kilometers of Iwakuni base,

including Okurokamijima, an uninhabited island in Hiroshima Prefecture, and the Air Self-Defense Force's Tsuiki base in Fukuoka Prefecture. In 2003, Okurokamijima once surfaced under its local mayor's initiative. However, the government, factoring in local opposition and geographical constraints, concluded that neither Okurokamijima nor the Tsuiki base would be appropriate for the touch-and-go training of US carrier-borne fighter jets.

The government plans to select a candidate site over a wider area. In selecting a candidate site, the government is required to consider preconditions, such as: 1) there are no surrounding precipitous mountains; 2) neighboring local residents will not have to suffer great amounts of noise; and 3) the weather is comparatively stable throughout the year. The government will face rough going in the process of selecting a candidate site.

(21) Minshuto to partially embrace right to collective defense

SANKEI (Page 5) (Excerpts)
November 10, 2006

An outline of a basic policy on security, now under study by the Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) administration and policy committee, was unveiled on Nov. 9. The outline calls for rejecting the conventional idea of distinguishing collective and individual self-defense. Based on the new idea of exercising the right of self-defense per se, the largest opposition party has come up with a position that it is possible for Japan to fight back by exercising its right to self-defense in the event a US naval vessel came under an armed attack by a third country during Japan-US joint operations in the Sea of Japan. The committee's basic policy embracing some actions the government has identified as constituting collective self-defense is likely to affect debate in the Abe administration, as well.

Running in the Minshuto presidential race in September, President Ichiro Ozawa unveiled what was called the "Ozawa vision" allowing Japan to exercise the right of collective or individual self-defense when facing the imminent danger of being attacked. The committee has been studying the matter in line of this policy course.

The committee has confirmed the policy direction to deal with the idea of self-defense instead of drawing a line between individual and collective self-defense. A senior Minshuto lawmaker has described the committee's view as a commonsense interpretation of the right of self-defense. A Maritime Self-Defense Force vessel's assistance for a US ship attacked by North Korea during a contingency on the Korean Peninsula constitutes an exercise of the right of collective self-defense, according to the government's interpretation. Minshuto's view is intended to interpret the same step simply as an act of self-defense.

There are concerns in the government that blanket approval of the right of collective self-defense would end up prodding Japan to extend assistance to US forces even on the other side of the globe. Minshuto's view is also aimed at dispelling such concerns by eliminating the existing conception of collective self-defense.

Minshuto's basic policy is expected to incorporate the phrase "actively take part in peace-building activities centering on the United Nations."

The basic policy also specifies that joining enforcement measures

under UN Charter Article 41 stipulating economic sanctions and Article 42 specifying military sanctions is consistent with the constitutional principle of playing an active international role. "Such an act is distinct from exercising the right of self-defense of a sovereign state," a government official explained.

The committee plans to obtain approval at a meeting of all Minshuto

lawmakers before the end of this year.

Once the policy is approved, the party plans to include it in its manifesto (campaign pledges) for the Upper House election next summer.

Government's study made little progress

Prime Minister Abe intends to have his administration study the right of collective self-defense, which the country possesses but is not allowed to exercise, according to the government's interpretation of the Constitution. But the government has yet to make any specific moves. In the meantime, discussion on the matter has been gathering momentum reflecting drastic changes in the environment surrounding East Asia, evidenced by North Korea's ballistic missile launches and nuclear test.

In the wake of the UN Security Council's adoption of a sanctions resolution, including cargo inspections, against North Korea, the government has been studying support activities, such as refueling US vessels at sea under the Regional Contingency Law. Although the law requires Self-Defense Force troops to halt their activities in a state of war, can they really withdraw while leaving US troops behind? The answer depends on the government's view on the right of collective self-defense.

Abe asked in the Diet, "In the event a US vessel navigating on the high seas alongside a Japanese ship was attacked, can't Japan assist it?" Defense Agency Director General Fumio Kyuma said: "During refueling activities, it's hard to determine which vessel - Japanese or US - was attacked. In reality, Japan must fight back under an arms protection provision in the SDF Law." But what if US forces were clearly targeted? Questions still remain.

The government's standpoint on the right of collective self-defense is also a bottleneck to the operation of a missile defense system against North Korean ballistic missiles.

The SDF might not be allowed to intercept a ballistic missile headed for the United States.

"The United States would be obligated to knock down a missile whether it was headed for Japan or the US, but Japan does not necessarily have the same obligation to America," US Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer said in a speech in Tokyo in October, urging the Japanese government to reexamine its view.

Abe, who thinks the Japan-US alliance must function effectively as a deterrent in East Asia, delivered a policy speech in September in which he said: "We will thoroughly study individual, specific cases to identify what kind of case falls under the exercise of the right of collective self-defense, which is forbidden under the Constitution." But the government's study has not made headway.

(22) Editorial: Deliberations on raising JDA to ministry status - National defense must take priority over party interests

TOKYO 00006492 007 OF 009

YOMIURI (Page 3) (Full)
November 10, 2006

Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan), in addition to the Social Democratic Party (SDP), has resorted to a strategy of boycotting deliberations over a package of legislative measures that will affect Japan's national defense.

The House of Representatives Security Council finally started substantive deliberations on bills related to elevating the Defense Agency (JDA) to ministry status yesterday. But Minshuto and the SDP both boycotted the meeting, claiming that the bid-rigging scandal involving the Defense Facilities Administration Agency (DFAA) has not been fully discussed.

Two weeks have already passed since an explanation of the bills was given in a Lower House plenary session.

Minshuto demanded intensive deliberations on the DFAA scandal as a precondition for discussing the bills. In response, the Security Council conducted intensive deliberations on the bid-rigging case for 12 hours over three days. Holding the deliberations contributed to delaying the start of discussion on the bills.

Whether to elevate the JDA status and the DFAA scandal are two separate matters.

Minshuto President Ozawa has repeatedly expressed approval of the idea of raising the JDA to ministry status. As seen from the presence of a parliamentary league in Minshuto supporting just that, a number of party members are in favor of the JDA-upgrade idea.

Despite this, Minshuto has yet to determine its stance over the bills. It is strange for the primary opposition party, which aims to take power, to remain undecided on its stance toward such key bills.

Minshuto and other opposition parties have fielded a united candidate for the upcoming Okinawa gubernatorial election. The party apparently deems it necessary to take joint steps with the Japanese Communist Party and the SDP, both of which are against the bills, through Nov. 19, the voting date for the election.

Such a stance is similar to that taken by the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) under the so-called 1955 setup, when the Liberal Democratic Party was in power and the JSP was the perennial opposition party, one that was not at all responsible.

Under the JDA, the Ground, Maritime, and Air Self-Defense Forces protect the peace and safety of Japan. The agency is also responsible for mapping out security policy.

The JDA is now an external agency of the Cabinet Office, so the JDA director general has no authority to call for a cabinet meeting to adopt key defense issues or to present the finance minister with a budgetary request.

In all other countries, including Japan's neighbors, a ministry is responsible for national defense. Japan is the only exception.

The environment surrounding Japan's national security has been greatly undermined due to the North Korean nuclear threat. It is

TOKYO 00006492 008 OF 009

necessary for Japan to clarify who holds responsibility and authority by raising the JDA to ministry status and to arrange a system to enable a quick response to national emergencies, as well as to any changes in the security environment.

It is important to discuss the bills in a sincere manner from the viewpoint not of party interests but national interests. We expect Ozawa to demonstrate leadership in unifying views in the party to support the bills.

(23) Questions for town meetings on educational reform found to have been "prearranged"; Another trick behind "Koizumi theater"

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Almost full)
November 10, 2006

Hideharu Hiramoto

It was discovered just recently that government officials had prearranged questions for town-hall meetings on educational reform initiated by the government. This discovery has forced the government to investigate all 174 such meetings held to date, but the repercussions seem likely to expand even further in the weeks ahead. The town-meeting system was adopted by the former Koizumi administration as a forum for direct dialogue between the government and the public and served as a stage for "theater politics" (led by former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi). But prearranging questioners and questions in line with the government's reform policy appears to be information manipulation. In other words, one

aspect of Koizumi politics is being brought into the open. The government is desperate to restore public trust in the town-meeting system, but no prospects for a restart are in sight, putting its future in doubt.

"Participants must be very displeased, and there will inevitably be criticism that the system lacks transparency," Administrative Vice Minister Shunichi Uchida of the Cabinet Office said at a press conference on Nov. 9, wholly admitting the government's inept behavior and offering an apology.

The government's investigations conducted through Nov. 9 revealed that five town meetings had involved prearranged questions. One such question prepared by government officials for the town meeting in Ehime Prefecture's Matsuyama City in May 2004 was, "The Basic Education Law needs to be revised so as to meet the new era." Another question prepared for the town meeting in Wakayama Prefecture's Wakayama City in October of the same year was, "The concern is that if the fiscal resources for compulsory education are transferred to local governments, regional disparities in education could emerge." These questions reflected the wishes of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. In some cases such notes as "use your own words as much as you can" or "please do not mention 'by request,'" were attached.

The town meeting was one of the pledges made by Koizumi when he assumed office as prime minister. A total of 174 town meetings were held from June 2001 through September 2006. It was a showcase of the Koizumi administration, and 11 million yen on average was spent for each town meeting last year, but the meetings are now suspected of having been staged PR events for government policy.

The government intends to refrain from holding town meetings until the results of the investigation come out. Chief Cabinet Secretary

TOKYO 00006492 009 OF 009

Yasuhisa Shiozaki, when asked about when they would resume, went no further than to say: "Please give us a little more time." After drastically reviewing the present town-meeting system, the government plans to restart it, but it still remains unable to find a way to regain the public's confidence.

SCHIEFFER